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# Northern Lights and Shadows

BY

J. S. CLARK

Wasagaming

Clear Lake



Riding Mountain National Park

1933

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## POLARIS

(*"Follow your spirits"*—Henry the VIII.)

O, pole-star of unerring beam,  
Dependable throughout the years,  
Thou art the monarch of all spheres!  
Sun, moon and stars around thee spin,  
With varying discs, that wane and win;  
Man weaves his web, and dreams his dream,  
Or, pyramids to hold thy gleam;  
Until he sinks beneath the sod,—  
Ashes to ashes, clod to clod.  
Thou setest a keynote for my cry,—  
Like Bethlehem's guiding-star on high,  
To indicate the Son of God!

That cry rings,—“Northward, through the night,  
Where man may win, although he fail,  
And strew his bones along the trail”.

Our answer echoes,—“Here am I”,—  
To bore through rock, or wing through sky;  
Let those cry Peace, who fear to fight,  
We breast the gale with keen delight;  
Sons of heroic pioneers,  
Keewaytinung shall dry our tears;  
Our ribbon of stale settlement  
Shall widen to a great content,  
Submerging interests and arrears!

Clear Lake, Depression Period.



# HOLIDAY FLIGHTS

BY

JEREMIAH S. CLARK

BRANDON, MAN.

1933

## CLEAR LAKE

(*Shrine of the Assiniboine*)

Clear Lake, dear lake!  
Kin of the clouds and the sea;  
Your evergreen trees are the home of the breeze  
To temper its breath, if we swelter or freeze,  
As we shake off our chains to be free.

Clear Lake, dear lake!  
We plunge in the crystalline wave;  
As we cleave a white path in our conjuring bath,  
O, save us, nor wipe out our spirits in wrath;  
Our usefulness ends with the grave.

Clear Lake, dear lake!  
Here paleface and redskin unite;  
Beguiled by such charm, leaving office or farm;  
Both hunter and hunted are free from alarm,—  
This Forest Reserve gives the right.

Clear Lake, dear lake!  
As blue as the fathomless sea;  
We kneel as we creep to the top of the steep,  
And wave a farewell, as we settle to sleep,  
Who have learned to appreciate thee!

Clear Lake, dear lake!  
Gray-green in the earliest light;  
How that lost loon's cry pierced earth and sky!  
How we shivered, although our fire burned high,  
In the chill dread hours of night.

Clear Lake, dear lake!  
The sun has arisen again,—  
Each morning, regardless of age, new-born;  
We fret and forget, as we welcome the morn,  
And go back to our task new men.

Clark Beach, Clear Lake, 1931.

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## SJOGREN THE BUILDER

(*Man-of-all-work and guide of all play*)

Here is to Sjogren! builder of shallop,  
Builder of cottages, houses or shacks,—  
Sjogren the bird-man, handyman, Norseman,  
Jack-of-all trades from a cook to a horseman;  
Plodding serene where a tenderfoot gallops,  
He is a hiker of glistening tracks;  
Showing the way for our volatile youth,  
Back to the Druidic temples of Truth;  
Builder, of mettle no fungus attacks;  
Blessings upon both himself and his wife!  
Here is to Sjogren, the builder of Life.

Clear Lake, May, 1926.

## TURP-ENTINE

(*"Extracted by heat and pressure, stimulates circulation, useful in the arts"*)

At a boiler, in a cavern,  
By a tiny hidden brook,  
When the golf-game is half over,  
We will rest and read our book.

O, you boiler, how you murmur!  
Mumbling like a bumble-bee;  
We are wet, and late for dinner,—  
Let us climb this spreading tree.

Look at these great blobs of crystal  
Oozing out beside my thumb,  
Better flavor, price and color  
Than the regular chewing-gum.

See the falcon, and the blue-bird,  
Sitting on that stately pine;  
I will scare them with my golf-ball,  
Bruising out pure turpentine.

Oh, my fish-lines are all snarling,  
Oh, those balls that once were mine,—  
They are lost, and gone forever,—  
Turpitude and turpentine!

Riding Mountain National Park, 1932.

## ECHOES OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

(*The dance of the unburied dead*)

Restlessly flitting, here and there,  
From out of the boundless,—  
Zig-zag and criss-cross, free as air,  
As transparent and soundless.

Colours? of course, but dabbled,  
Splashed through the range of the prism.  
Whispers? and worse, harsh gabbed,  
Rasped like oaths of the abyss.

Lithe-limbed Aurora of old,  
In her ecstacy, dances,—  
Enslaving earth-spirits, overbold,—  
Souls bartered for glances!  
Peek, and then whisper of things  
So wild and unreal,—  
A flitting of gossamer wings,  
Untried, but ideal.

Secrets of Aurum dispensed,  
That queen of all metals,—  
Sunlight and moonlight condensed,  
In leaves, sepals and petals;  
Secrets of intimate flower-life,  
With stamen and pistil,—  
And how they interlock our life,  
As stainless as crystal.

Who may reply to their questing,—  
Do their limbs never tire?  
Go bury their bones,—no jesting,  
By the light of false-fire;  
Mark the spot where they died,  
Or they gyrate forever,—  
Not having crossed The Divide,  
But for you they may never!

Silence, crude son of a clod,  
They approach you for severance—;  
These be lost children of God,—  
Uncover in reverence.  
You have basked in their light for a time;  
In the darkness have pity;  
Bind up their flights into rhyme,—  
Give our people the ditty.

Spirit Rapids, (still undated).

## MISQUASSIN

(A tale of the origin of gold)

So many moons ago, none can recall,  
Our hunters found a "Monias" on the shore;  
He was a red-haired stranger, lean and tall,  
He paddled backward, with a fastened oar,  
And wished to wander, lonely, evermore.

We taught him language people understand,  
When we had fed and tamed him, like a bear;  
He drew queer maps to picture sea and land,  
And showed us how to build a shack and chair,  
Or spread a sail, to drive canoes by air.

In trying to return by Hudson Bay,  
He proved to all that he had gone insane;  
Who ever heard of green-land down that way?  
We conjured out his demon with great pain,  
And would have choked him if it came again.

Adopted as a member of our Band,—  
His presence led to jealousy and strife,  
For warrior-braves resented his command;  
He took the old chief's daughter for his wife,  
And said he would renounce the lonely life.

But none could shield, from one discarded brave,  
Their nuptial nest,—Manigo-togan Falls;  
He stole the bride he had been asked to save;  
Then bashed Misquassin's head against the walls,  
And dug a grave, close, where the curlew calls.

When they would cover up that golden hair,  
Each heaping spadeful changed to shining red;  
And flame-like streaks rose waving in the air,  
Until they wondered if the groom were dead,  
Or changed into a "Manitou" instead.

Then, all Rice-Lake became one sad taboo,—  
The Bloodvein Band must hunt by other streams,  
And, pagan to this day, must carry through  
The curse that killers harbour in their dreams,  
Which scribblers fail to tell on twenty reams.

When "Mounties" found no criminal there, but gold,  
Prospectors rushed to prove Pelletier's tale;  
And, by its glitter, thousands soon were sold.  
For scribes, who seek no gold, its glories pale,  
Till "Ysourdoughs" laugh, and mourners cease their wail.

Black-Bear Island, 1902.

## STAMPEDE!

(*To tired toilers everywhere*)

When tired of caring for other folk's ills,  
You sigh for relief from the humdrum that kills,  
The wild-west salutes you,—bon-jour, and good-day!  
To Clear Riding-Mountain Lake, come, come-away.

Escaping alarm-clock, and telephone-stand,  
Strike out for the portals of holiday-land;  
Lay off academics,—you can and you may  
Come out in the open,—some even may stay,

To gallop cross-country, with pony and pup,  
Like jolly Prince-Charming, who never grows up;  
No Georgius Kill-dragon in legend, or since,  
Outrides his companions like Edward our Prince.

Come visit his ranch at the foothills, and see  
What a bang-up Canadian a Prince can be;  
Line up with his lead, and rejuvenate stales,  
As you join in the cavalcade, following "Wales".  
Brandon, 1930.

## THE WINDEGOO

(*"But don't mention it"*)

I scoff at all altars and wayside shrines,  
Yet build one, whenever my heart inclines;  
So, not having anything better to do,  
I set up a shrine for the Windegoo.

We worship our idols for what they are worth,  
And please them by conquering heaven and earth;  
Yet, the conquest of self is a worthier fight,  
And, love for another brings dearer delight.

"Ye worship ye know not what," said Christ,—  
"We know what we worship", and so keep tryst;  
All worship develops the ego within,—  
Who knows and refuses, to him it is sin.

So, call me a heretic, crank or fool,  
I hike back to nature to go to school;  
And a mellowness softens my cold soul, too,  
As I sit by the shrine of the Windegoo.

Cranbrook Lodge, Muskoka, 1930.

## THE CONJURER

(*"Honour the Medicine-man"*)

"Muskeekoo-wininee" is no charlatan,

Though he gathers his herbs in the dark;  
He can brew you a cure in his old tin can,  
Or melt down a mummy and mold him a man,  
As he blows on the "iskooday" spark.

He strips off the bark for his balsams and balms,  
When the winter commences to wane;  
And pilots you safely through storm-rings, or calms,—  
Though he frown at your rashness, and smile at your  
Until firm on your feet once again. [qualms,

He knows both the blossoming-time of disease,

And the day it will scatter its seed;  
He can lay you a-spell, or recall, if you please,  
The blackest of witchcraft,—with wonderful ease;  
For he knows every oil, rock and weed.

He mixes solutions that frost cannot freeze,—

Can change solid ice back to air;  
He charms out your back-ache, and supplies your knees,  
And ties-up the demons of pain and disease,—  
Where witches resign in despair.

He dives like moosooms for the lily-pad roots,

And grinds down their ginger in cakes;  
If your innards tie knots,—and the gripe-demon shoots,  
He straightens the links from your cap to your boots,  
With the fearful contortions he makes.

Allow him his conjuring tent, and a few

Flint stones, heated red in the fire,  
And the sulphurous odors that come hissing through  
Would kill any demon that broke from his crew,—  
While the good-spirits praise and admire.

Lake Winnipegosis, 1911.

## BUFFALOE-BILL

(King of the cow-boy type)

Hats off to Bill Cody, big-chief of the plains,  
As we stand on the Lookoff beside his remains!  
'Tis sunset, the shadows are gathering fast,  
Our eyes, too, are dim, as we think of the past.

Bill, Bill, Buffaloe-Bill!  
Forever asleep on this beautiful hill.

We gather wild flowers in purples and whites,  
With cypress and pine-cones, all over these heights,  
Then scatter them, sadly, bedewed with our tears,  
As our thoughts travel back through the mists of the years.

Bill, Bill, Buffaloe-Bill!  
We bring you this tribute of peace and goodwill.

Such blood and such treasure was wastefully spilt,  
The transcontinental had never been built;  
Fresh-meat for construction no money could buy,  
Till your trusty rifle barked sharply nearby,

Bill, Bill, Buffaloe-Bill!  
You conquered the prairies along with Jim Hill.

With painted Puebloes I scream my "ki-yi!"  
Their tom-toms resounding from flat-rock nearby,  
Come back to your cousins; Oh, send us a sign,—  
Or we dance till we die,—send back life to your pine.

Bill, Bill, Buffaloe-Bill!  
Would God we might also our mission fulfil.

Then, the spirit of Cody appeared in a mood,  
His pine-tree, too, burgeoned where dead it had stood;  
In service for others his spirit found birth,  
So Rotary's war-cry will conquer the earth.

Bill, Bill, rough-rider-Bill!  
This message of Service in all men instil.

Pakaska Tepee, Denver, 1926.

## HERMES THE HASTY

(Like "Mr. Speaker", he listens in silence)

The youth who runs, but never strays from home,  
"Cries, Come and Wel-come! from the Talk-house dome;  
Our sessions round one out, with give and get,—  
For man is part of all that he has met.

The eager youth speaks up for those beneath  
Who ran to sit, and shout to save their breath;  
Nor he alone, of all that prancing throng,  
Runs while he stands, to mark-time all day long.

From my high perch I gaze serenely down,  
On toilworn shirt-sleeves, and on classic gown;  
Right gladly would I tread the busy street,  
And hide my gilt with mire splashed from my feet.

Come, light your torch at mine, and blaze away,  
To kill or cure your comrades in the fray,  
As back and forth the aimless traffic flows,  
Each at the beck of every wind that blows.

Both cry, "Pro-pelle-cutem," Outs and Ins,—  
We saved our country, and would save our skins;  
The wear and tear is equal, lose or win,  
For inside-out, perforce, is outside-in.

Behold our Mall, wide-stretching-out below,  
Though which is head or handle few may know;  
"Portage" has proved triumphant prophecy,  
Produce the Mall,—what may not "Bay Street" be?

On to the Bay! the compass shows the path;  
This House, that rumbles like a Bundesrath,  
But clocks the dial round twice every day;  
You are not weathercocks,—up, and away!

Winnipeg, once upon a time.

## A BACKWARD LOOK

(*The last of the old school*)

You may set down with pen and book  
The last wild redman's backward look;  
A hundred heats and snows have passed,  
I hope the next will be my last;  
I see my end approaching soon,  
And welcome it,—a priceless boon!

As you advance my kind retreat,  
We starve amongst your fields of wheat;  
We have no room to stretch our legs,—  
Nor twigs enough to drive for pegs,—  
Hemmed in by settlers deaf and blind,  
I waste my breath against the wind.

Ian-da-we-way is my name,  
As "Double-Echo" known to fame:  
Once I could mock the thunder loud,  
Or snatch the spit-fire from the cloud;  
I conjured demons long ago,  
Where now I sit to melt the snow!

Across my back, with heated urn,  
In youth, a full-orbed sun they burn;  
It should be setting-sun for me,  
Who long for death, to set me free;  
Excuse the pride, that chokes me still,  
As I indite a redman's will.

I give, bequeath, indite, dévise,  
The noisy earth, and quiet skies,  
To those who have the eyes to see,—  
You are not of that company,—  
I give the music of the spheres  
To forest-folk, who use their ears!

I give,—but what have I to give?  
I give it up,—why should I live?  
I beat my head against the bars,  
To see my children drive their cars;  
Soon, I shall be a gibbering spook,  
Indulging in a backward look.

Lake St. Martin, 1912.

## ABEGWEIT

(Cradled in the encircling arm)

The arm of my Mother encircling enfolds me,  
She croons "A-beg-weit", as she hugs me to breast;  
Her voice rings with pride as she mockingly scolds me;  
While warm on her bosom I snuggle to rest;—  
So sang in sweet numbers a great Micmac poet  
Of her, whom he never could picture in prose,  
The gem of the Maritimes, (does she not show it?)  
New Brunswick, New Scotia, New-foundland enclose.

Acknowledge the infant demanding protection,  
You hoary Laurentians, first rocks to emerge!  
No latter-day mud-heap obscures the connection,  
Since motherhood instinct implanted the urge;  
A sense of our weakness we shout to the nations,  
"Parva sub ingenti" our emblem proclaims;  
Go, read if you can geologic formations  
Millenniums ere places were labelled with names.

Like barrier-reefs to keep out the cold ocean,  
They coddled their nursling until she had grown,  
Then Cartier's prows soon stirred up a commotion,  
With problems of Europe outnumbering our own.  
"Saint Jean", then "Prince Edward", but "A-beg-weit"  
            lingers;  
Regimes leave their impress and pass in a night,—  
Had we names like the centipedes,—all toes and fingers,  
We still call thee "A-beg-weit",—Infant's Delight!

Bay View, P. E. Island, 1899.

## KEE-WAY-TIN-UNG

(*The Challenge of the Northwind*)

I was here before your foothills  
Echoed to the hunter's gun,  
I am older than yon Rockies,  
Flinging back the morning sun;  
Ere the fire-stick of the redskin  
Started flame to sear the earth,  
I, Kee-way-tin-ung, The Northwind,  
Had my ignominious birth.

Offspring I of many races,  
Showing traces of them all,—  
Blonde or dusky, proud or humble,  
Strong or feeble, short or tall.  
Laughing at all tame conventions,  
I have flirted with the stars;  
Sensed the loveliness of Venus,  
And the coarse red-rage of Mars.

I am tyrant of the barrens,  
I devour my cringing slaves;  
They who follow me, or fight me,  
Die in harness,—minus graves;  
“No retreat” is in my orders,  
And “No quarter” will I give;  
All the wise admire and fear me,—  
I kill men that Man may live.

Jaded heir of all the ages,—  
Would you seek the mother-lodes?  
I can lead to open spaces  
Ere your pent-up power explodes,  
Fill you with the urge of conquest  
Till your threadworn heart-strings burn,—  
Not a foot has touched my tundra  
But is aching to return!

## TREATY TIME

(*The great anniversary*)

Peace stands secure  
And will endure  
Forevermore,  
Our fathers swore;  
"While grass shall grow,  
And rivers flow."

The time is ripe  
To pass the pipe,  
No cloud between  
Us and our Queen,  
Axe buried deep  
By rockies steep.

We stretch our legs  
And drive our pegs,  
We will play fair  
With earth and air;  
We come and go  
"Nee", "Eskimo".

On with the dance!  
We glide and prance,  
While Totem-poles  
Inspire our souls,  
And boast to me  
Of ancestry.

Loud drums compete  
With hurrying feet  
To celebrate  
The death of hate  
At Treaty-Time.  
(So ends our rhyme.)

Lower Fairford, Man., 1906.

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Lower Fairford, Man., 1906.

## CANADAFEND

(A Canadian's war-thought)

An ancient awk of Labrador,  
A loose-limbed frequenter of shore,  
Could neither fight nor fly.  
Old sailors relish juicy meat,  
"Arise St. Peter, slay and eat;"  
When rose that cry,  
He could but die.

A musquash of the Maritime  
Swam heedless when his fur was prime,  
Or dived to dodge his foes,—  
A sudden stab, a stinging pain,—  
No more he swims that way again,—  
But wide-webbed toes  
Bob where he rose.

A muskallonge above Quebec  
Seemed in St. Lawrence' tide a speck,  
Though he was keen and strong;  
A singing troll-line cuts the stream,—  
A tug, a strain, a glancing gleam,—  
Nor struggles long  
On that barbed prong.

A beaver of mid-western plains  
Toiled daily at his dams and drains,  
Nor paused by night to rest;  
Though showing almost human sense,  
He lacked the art of self-defence;  
A coyote guest,—  
Castor non est.

A giant fir straight as a rod,  
Looked up from earth, and spurned the sod,  
Till lordly height was gained.—  
Then, scorched by fire's hellish mirth,  
It crashed a shapeless mass to earth;  
Much was attained,—  
Mere ash remained.

O Canada, I take my stand  
For God, and home, and native land;  
My first line of defence is here;  
Your fertile fields and open shore  
Invite invaders, as of yore;  
Or far or near,  
A day, a year.

Hythe, Kent, England, 1917.